

**Abstract and Bio Booklet**  
**PG CWWN Conference, The University of Hull, 9 September 2019**

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**Keynote Speaker:**

**Joanna Walsh** is the author of seven books including the digital work, [seed-story.com](http://seed-story.com). Her latest book, *Break.up*, was published by Semiotext(e) and Tuskar Rock in 2018. She also works as a critic, editor and teacher. She is a UK Arts Foundation fellow, and the founder of #readwomen, described by the *New York Times* as 'a rallying cry for equal treatment for women writers'. She also founded and runs @noentry\_arts, in response to age bars to opportunities in visual and literary arts. She is a current PhD candidate in Creative and Critical Writing at the University of East Anglia, writing on digital narratives and digital selves.

**The Organisers:**

**Isabelle Coy-Dibley** is a PhD candidate at the University of Westminster, researching the relationship between corporeal memory and sexual forms of touch in women's experimental writing, particularly focusing on the authors Marguerite Duras, Anaïs Nin, Kathy Acker, Monique Wittig and Dodie Bellamy. Her interdisciplinary approach engages with research in theories of gender, sexuality and intimacy, memory studies, corporeal feminism and queer theory. She received a First Class Honours in BA Hons English Literature (University of Westminster, 2012), an MA in English: 1850-Present (King's College London, 2013) and an MA in Gender, Sexuality and Culture (Birkbeck, University of London, 2014).

**Olivia Heal** is a Creative-Critical (Prose) PhD Candidate at the University of East Anglia. Her work engages with contemporary maternal writing (Andrea Brady, Maggie Nelson, Jenny Offill, Sarah Manguso, Joanna Walsh, Sheila Heti...), with an emphasis on how maternal praxis and experience informs the literature. The critical thesis inhabits an affirmative methodological stance, through figures of 'interruption', 'effacement'...it seeks to imagine a maternal aesthetic. Critical and creative elements of the PhD fold one into the other. The latter occupies a maternal first person in a fragmented personal essay. Her short fiction has appeared in a variety of literary journals including *The White Review*, *gorse*, and *The Stinging Fly*.

**Jade Hinchliffe** is a PhD researcher in the department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Hull who is funded by the North of England Consortium for Arts and Humanities. She has a first-class BA (Hons) and an MA (by research) in English Literature from the University of Huddersfield. Jade is currently researching the portrayal of surveillance, social sorting and biometric technologies in contemporary dystopian fiction.

**Panel Chair:**

**Sabine Vanacker**

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**Content warning: Some of the abstracts in this booklet and the corresponding papers deal with sensitive topics such as rape, sexual assault, violence, traumatic childbirth and holocaust, trauma and bereavement.**

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## “Skin yielding; shapes slithering and rushing” — The Nativity of Traumatic Childbirth in Historical Fiction

Vicky Brewster (Swansea University)

It has become almost a cliché in fiction to use sexual abuse or rape as a defining traumatic event for female characters. However, a new trope is becoming popular in neo-historical fiction: traumatic childbirth. This paper focuses on three texts that demonstrate this trope. In *The Corset* by Laura Purcell, the birth is that of Ruth's younger sister. Ruth is required to deliver the baby and stitch up her mother following the birth. In *Little Eve* by Catriona Ward, the birth occurs 'off screen' in highly stylised, gothic circumstances, and in *Burial Rites* by Hannah Kent, the birth results in the death of the mother, traumatising Agnes, who has been welcomed by this woman as a daughter for the first time. In each of these stories, the births themselves are highly traumatic, but it is often the onlookers who are most traumatised.

This paper will consider the way in which trauma occurs not just to the women giving birth, but to those assisting or onlooking, highlighting the strongly feminine space of childbirth. Ward and Purcell's novels are horror as well as neo-historic, raising questions about growing female spaces in horror and genre fiction, and whether childbirth trauma is a way to do this. Childbirth is also often a rite of passage, and the way birth is portrayed in these texts intrinsically effects the relationships between women. In this way, childbirth could be described as reconfiguring a feminist trauma. This paper hopes to establish a change occurring in fiction, bringing trauma into the domestic sphere, and moving into a feminine space and experience.

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**Vicky Brewster** recently completed her Masters in English with the Open University, writing her dissertation on humanity and religion in the novels of Michel Faber. She is now a part-time PhD student of English starting her first year at Swansea University. Her area of research is ghosts, hauntings and hauntology in 21<sup>st</sup> century fiction. Her day job is as a freelance editor of long-form fiction. She also frequently presents at SFF and horror writers' events and is currently organising a gothic-themed writing retreat.

## “She had swallowed her questions”: Layers of Discipline in Lena Andersson’s *Wilful Disregard*

Rosalind Brown (University of East Anglia)

This paper explores the ways that discipline is figured in Lena Andersson’s novella *Wilful Disregard* (2013, translated 2015). *Discipline* has an overlapping set of meanings which render it peculiarly interesting as an aesthetic term: discipline can be the field in which one is trained, the process of training, the result of the training, or the punishment for deviating from the training. This concept of ‘literary discipline’ as an aesthetic category remains under-theorised, but carries a striking ambivalence, referring to both the *production* of writing a text, and the *reduction* often involved in editing it. This ambivalence is particularly magnetised by the contemporary novella, a form easily critiqued as a ‘lightweight’, underwritten novel or ‘flabby’ overwritten short story, and which is moreover regularly metaphorised as a ‘slender’ or ‘svelte’ body, often female. Novellas by and about women thus magnetise a series of questions around discipline and gender which are especially live in the current decade.

*Wilful Disregard* follows the protagonist Ester Nilsson’s painful infatuation with an artist, Hugo Rask, and contains an extraordinarily multi-layered exploration of self-discipline, which I will begin to trace in the second half of the paper. Ester uses self-discipline both skilfully and unskilfully: to forge a successful career as a writer of short books; to try to persuade Hugo back towards a more spontaneous, romantically ‘inspired’ attraction; to critique him on intellectual grounds to gain a sense of superiority; and to attempt to regulate or repress her own ‘hungry’ desire for him. That these conflicting layers exist within the ambivalently disciplined novella form, I will suggest, renders them especially powerful.

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**Rosalind Brown** is a PhD candidate in Creative-Critical Writing at the University of East Anglia. Her project explores forms of discipline (writerly, bodily, self-imposed, sexual, intellectual), and the novella form, and incorporates related interests such as fantasy, Shakespeare, fanfiction, and forms of non-verbal knowledge, including silence, meditation, and art music. Her work has appeared in *Lighthouse*, *Ambit*, and *Best British Short Stories 2017*. She was a co-organiser of the symposium *Love Takes Risks: The Poetics of Contemporary Small-Press Fiction* (UEA, March 2019), and presented at *I’ll Show You Mine: A Sex Writing Symposium* (National Centre for Writing, June 2019).

## Exploring women's experiences of death, dying, bereavement and grief through archaeology and creative writing

**Dr Jennifer Dayes (University of Bradford), Dr Karina Croucher (University of Bradford), Dr Melanie Giles (University of Manchester)**

Creative writing allows difficult or taboo subjects to be explored in a safe manner. Archaeology has been found to provide the same, with the AHRC-funded Continuing Bonds project demonstrating that archaeology can spark discussion and attitude change in the sensitive topics of death, dying, bereavement and grief (Büster et al. 2018; Dayes et al. 2018). In a follow-on initiative - the Continuing Bonds: Creative Dissemination project - archaeology, contemporary experiences and creative writing have been combined to continue facilitating the exploration of death, dying, bereavement and grief themes. The result is an anthology showcasing poetry, short stories and flash-fiction inspired by archaeology and contemporary considerations of death, dying, bereavement, and grief. Many women have contributed to the anthology and their pieces are particularly interesting to consider as the feminine experience of such topics hold elements unique to their gender. For example, research suggests women are more likely to initiate discussion about their own death (Skulason et al. 2014), give more sympathy to the bereaved (Versalle & McDowell, 2005) and are more likely to enlist religion, vent to others, and seek emotional support to cope with grief than men (Nazare et al., 2013). Typically, women provide more care at the end of life (Brazil et al. 2009). We showcase two pieces of creative writing written by women in our Continuing Bonds: Creative Dissemination workshops and consider what these pieces tell us about the current landscape of death, dying, bereavement and grief and the experiences of women within this.

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**Dr Jennifer Dayes** is a counselling psychologist who works in both research and practice. She is employed by the University of Bradford as a co-investigator on the Continuing Bonds: Creative Dissemination initiative. This project uses archaeological and contemporary case materials to inspire pieces of creative writing and poetry about death, dying, bereavement and grief. In her spare time, Jennie is a writer of novels and flash fiction.

**Dr Karina Croucher** is an archaeologist employed by the University of Bradford as a senior lecturer. She is principal investigator on the Continuing Bonds: Creative Dissemination project. Karina specialises in funerary archaeology and is interested in widening contemporary discourse around death, dying, bereavement and grief.

**Dr Melanie Giles** is an archaeologist employed by the University of Manchester as a senior lecturer. She is a co-investigator on the Continuing Bonds: Creative Dissemination project. Melanie specialises in a range of areas including Iron Age studies, bog bodies and funerary archaeology. She writes poetry.

## A Comparative Study of Heterosexual Eroticism and the Search for Identity in Four African Francophone Novels Dooshima Lilian Dugguh (University of Birmingham)

Cet article examine la crise identitaire de l'homme et la femme africain en relation de l'érotisme et leurs sexualités étant les manifestations par lesquelles leurs identités sont établies. L'étude critique de *Femme nue...femme noire* de Calixthe Beyala, *Moi Tituba, sorcière de Salem* de Maryse Condé, on cherche à dépeindre et dépoétiser l'image de la femme noire face aux exigences patriarcal. De l'autre cote, présentant les idées dans *Fleur d'une peau* de William Sassine et *Adam et plusieurs Eves* de Ferdinand Kosh, on mettre en cause des modelés mis en place pour la domination masculine dans la société postcoloniale contemporaine. Les deux buts principaux c'est d'abord d'engager avec le mystère sexuel autour de deux sexes afin d'analyser la révolte et la liberté sexuelle de la femme comme outil pour l'établissement de son identité a elle et puis, pour examiner comment l'homme s'emploie de l'érotisme et la sexualité afin de répondre à la question de sa domination et sa quête identitaire dans la société. La conclusion propose la déconstruction de la hiérarchie dans la société afin de permettre la liberté sexuelle pour les deux sexes et ainsi, faciliter l'émancipation sexuelle de la société.

This article examines the identity crisis of the African man and woman in relation to the manifestations of their eroticism and sexuality through which their identities are established. Through a critical study of Calixthe Beyala's *Femme nue...femme noire* and Maryse Condé's *Moi Tituba, sorcière de Salem*, the paper unravels the image of the woman in the face of patriarchal demands. On the other hand, presenting the ideas in William Sassine's *Fleur d'une peau* and *Adam et plusieurs Eves* de Ferdinand Kosh, a review is made regarding the mechanisms which facilitate male dominance in the postcolonial contemporary society. The two main goals of this paper are thus: to engage with the sexual mystery around the two sexes in order to analyze female eroticism, sexual revolt and freedom as a tool for the establishment of her identity and secondly, to examine how male eroticism and sexuality respond to the quest for dominance and identity. The paper concludes by proposing the dismantling of the society's hierarchal structures in order to promote equality and sexual emancipation.

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**Dooshima Lilian Dugguh** is an international student from Nigeria. She is a first year PhD French student with the Department of Modern Languages, University of Birmingham. Her research topic is titled "Post-independence disillusionment with African politics-post-colonial literary voices". This research is situated in the domain of Francophone African literature of the post-independence era and seeks to utilize the literary works of some selected authors to unravel the theme of disillusionment as presented in francophone African literary works, with the aim of providing new parameters through which disillusionment can be better understood and approached, devoid of colonial histories. This aims at tracing disillusion in literary African history and studying the phenomenon from both negative and positive perspectives examining how it can be interpreted to best fit in the post-independence era. Her other research interests include; French education, gender and sexuality, literature and globalization, feminist writing, and child abuse.

## **Biblical Women say #MeToo: Sexual Agency and the Reclamation of Voice in Contemporary Women's Writing**

**Ann-Marie Edwards (Teesside University)**

Through the global medium of the internet, the #MeToo movement has allowed a chorus of voices to ring out in recent years, giving expression to women's experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The similarities between the electronic medium of the internet and the verbal expression of oral tradition has been explored by John Miles Foley (2012) who claims that "both technologies are radically alike".<sup>1</sup> The interactive nature of the internet and oral narrative tradition, allow for a continued forming and reforming of narrative, disrupting the homogenous message of the static written record and creating spaces for alternative voices to be heard. This paper will explore the ways in which contemporary women writers and the women of the #MeToo movement are turning to modes of expression reminiscent of oral narrative in order to express ideas around sexual assault and sexual agency. To do this it will examine Anita Diamant's 1997 novel *The Red Tent*, which rewrites the biblical narrative of 'The Rape of Dinah' from Genesis chapter 34. At the formal level of the text, Diamant engages with the concept of oral formulaic composition, exploring the Bible's own origins as oral literature and challenging its patriarchal narrative. In both the #MeToo movement and Diamant's novel we see women turning to forms of oral narrative expression to disrupt the phallogentric authority of the static, linear written record, creating spaces in which alternative narratives and marginalised voices can be heard.

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**Ann-Marie Edwards** obtained an MA degree in English with distinction from Teesside University in 2018, from which she also received her undergraduate degree in English Studies in 2011. Her research interests lie in contemporary women's historical fiction and the rewriting of women's history, with particular interest in fiction that appropriates elements of oral narrative tradition within the written form. Lately, she has been exploring this in relation to contemporary women's rewritings of the book of Genesis around the topics of voice, narrative form and the female body.

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<sup>1</sup> John Miles Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind*, (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 5.

## Telling Tales: Filmic Testimony in Jennifer Fox's *The Tale* (2018) Stefanie El Madawi (University of Huddersfield)

Screenwriter-Director, Jennifer Fox's 2018 film, *The Tale* critically examines her own experience of childhood sexual abuse from a position of adult retrospect. The self-referential film explores themes of testimony and witnessing as Fox confronts her memories and experiences, allowing her to re-evaluate the veracity towards self-understanding and healing. According to Dominic La Capra:

The importance of testimonies becomes more apparent when they are related to the way they provide something other than purely documentary knowledge [...] in the attempt to understand experience and its aftermath, including the role of memory and its lapses, in coming to terms with – or denying and repressing – the past.  
(2001: p. 86-7)

In this context, *The Tale* and the processes involved in its production function as self-witness, which is a primary component of testimony (Felman and Laub, 1995). For Dori Laub (1995), testimony is intersubjective and occurs at three levels: firstly, “the level of being witness to oneself within the experience”, which supposes “autobiographical awareness” (1995: p. 61) in self-witnessing; secondly, “the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others” (p. 61) determined by “involvement [...] not in the events, but in the accounts given of them” as “the immediate receiver of these testimonies” (p. 62); and thirdly, “the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (p. 61), a process by which the self-witness and the immediate receiver “alternate between moving closer and then retreating from the experience with the sense that there is a truth that [each is] trying to reach” (p. 61). In the writing and production of *The Tale*, Fox engages each level of testimony, invoking a witnessing model through viewership with film as an ideal intersubjective vehicle.

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**Stefanie El Madawi** BA (Hons), MRes, PGCert is in the final year of PhD study in the School of Music, Humanities and Media at the University of Huddersfield, UK as the recipient of a North of England Consortium for Arts and Humanities (NECAH) bursary awarded in 2015. Research interests include: Autobiography and Nonfiction, the Therapeutic Applications of Literature and Film, Affect and Adaptation Studies. Teaching experience encompasses Contemporary Women's Literature, Critical and Cultural Theory, and Adaptation Studies.

## Messing, Othering, Leaking: Towards a Feminist Poetics of Failure in Contemporary Women's Writing

Clare Fisher (Leeds University)

This paper asks how and how far formal experimentation with failure in contemporary women's writing can act as a vehicle for critiquing and imagining alternatives to a postfeminist sensibility. It takes as its starting point Rosalind Gill's observation that, over the last ten years, postfeminist sensibilities have secured a near hegemony over our cultural, affective and political life by acting as a 'gendered technology of self' which 'produces a distinctive 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 2001 [1961]) in which women must disavow - or at least render palatable - a whole range of experiences and emotions - notably insecurity, neediness, anger and complaint' (Gill, 2017, 619). It brings Gill's work into conversation with the work of queer affect theorists Sara Ahmed (2006, 2010, 2017) and Lauren Berlant (2011, 2013) in order to illuminate the ways in which formal experimentation with failure is deployed by contemporary women writers as a means of exposing, critiquing and resisting the affective politics of postfeminism. It will read Nicole Flattery's *Show Them a Good Time* (2019) and Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) with these theorists in order to outline what a feminist poetics of failure can look like at this particular moment and where it might travel in the future. It will then briefly explore the development of such a poetics in my own creative work.

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**Clare Fisher** writes fiction and teaches creative writing. Her first novel, *All the Good Things* (Viking, 2017) won a Betty Trask Award and her short story collection *How the Light Gets In* (Influx Press, 2018) was longlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize and the Edgehill Short Story Prize. Raised in London, she now lives in Leeds, where she is studying for an AHRC-funded PhD in Creative Writing, whose topic (broadly) is failure. Find her on Twitter @claresitafisher

## A Mother's Grief and its Public Disclosure

Dr Rebecca Goss (Poet)

In 2008, my sixteen-month old daughter Ella died from a rare congenital heart condition. I wrote a collection of poems about her life, her death and my grief, titled *Her Birth*, (Carc Janet/Northern House, 2013). It was shortlisted for many literary prizes. I spoke frequently, in public, about my experiences. At first, it felt liberating to talk openly about my daughter's death, but eventually the act of disclosing my personal story took its toll. I retreated from public events, and the book itself. The last decade has seen a boom in 'death memoir' and though there have been many studies of the forms of autobiography, much less has been said of the costs, both personal and professional, of literary self-exposure. In 2018, I began a PhD by Publication at UEA to address this unresearched area. My thesis comprises a critical analysis of my poetry collection *Her Birth*, accompanied by a study of the consequences of self-disclosure, particularly within a prize culture. I explored the consequences of placing a personal narrative into the public sphere by reflecting on my own experiences and the experiences of three other female writers who have published prize-winning memoirs on the subject of grief: Cathy Rentzenbrink, Alice Jolly and Marion Coutts. I interviewed each author at length, asking if publishing autobiographical truths had had an impact on their health, mental wellbeing and the grieving process. I would like to present a short reading from *Her Birth*, the findings from my thesis, and a talk about the costs of publishing 'grief literature'.

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**Rebecca Goss** lives in Suffolk. Her first full-length collection, *The Anatomy of Structures*, was published in 2010 by Flambard Press. Her second collection *Her Birth* (Carc Janet/Northern House, 2013) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection 2013, the Warwick Prize for Writing 2015 and the Portico Prize for Literature 2015. It won the poetry category in the East Anglian Book Awards in 2013. In 2014, Rebecca was selected for the Poetry Book Society's Next Generation Poets. *Carousel*, her collaboration with the photographer Chris Routledge, was published in 2018 by Guillemot Press. Her third full-length collection *Girl* was published with Carcanet/Northern House in April 2019. She was Creative Writing Fellow 2018-19 at Liverpool John Moores University. She has an MA in Creative Writing from Cardiff University, and in 2019 was awarded a PhD by Publication from the University of East Anglia.

## Creative Writing Roundtable

Susannah Heffernan, Cheryl Powell, Vanwy Arif MacDonald (University of Warwick)

Three emerging authors from the University of Warwick, will each read short fiction works which explore the conference themes in unusual ways. Susannah will present a short story, focussing on the concept of motherhood, where she experiments with the reader's perceptions of the unities of action, place and time, via a 'what if' narrative wherein notions of the self are up for grabs. The centrality of emotional experience informing the central female voice will draw upon themes pertaining to animal alterity.

Cheryl Powell will present one of her published stories - *Growth*, a 'metaphor-made-literal' story, a darkly comic psychological vignette of married life. Cheryl recently appeared at The Book Club in Shoreditch at 'the biggest spoken word night in London for women' (Evening Standard) an event which has been called "feminism at its ruthless best" by Blouinart. She was helping to launch the Anthology 'Disturbing the Beast' published by Boudicca press to celebrate female weird fiction.

Vanwy will present a reflective, autobiographical piece which looks at the ways girls and boys are socialised. Her short story explores the themes of gender roles, acceptance of ascribed roles and their consequences.

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**Susannah Heffernan** is an emerging author of literary speculative fiction. Having gained her MA from the Warwick Writing Programme, she is currently a PhD candidate in Literary Practice. She has performed her work in London and the West Midlands, and appears in Open Pen magazine and the anthology, Singularity50, which awarded her 'Most Outstanding Original Voice' in 2018. @sueheffwrites [www.susannahheffernan.com](http://www.susannahheffernan.com)

**Cheryl Powell** is an emerging weird flash fiction writer whose dark stories centre on the flawed and the grotesque, and transgressive angst. She has an MA from the Warwick Writing Programme and her short stories have appeared in The Mechanics Institute Review 2018, Litro, Everyday Fiction, Spelk, Rattles Tales, Breaking the Surface, Kamena, Flash Fiction Magazine and in the *Disturbing the Beast* anthology published by Boudicca Press. 'The Liars' League, Hong Kong will perform her work later this year. @chezzapowell

**Vanwy Arif MacDonald** is a writer of poetry and short stories. She is member of the Warwick Writing Programme. Vanwy was longlisted for The Room short story competition in 2017. She has read her work in London and Warwickshire. Vanwy has an interest in Islamic tradition and has attended the Islamic Studies PGA at Warwick.

## Unmaking the Home in Deborah Levy's *The Cost of Living* Dearbhaile Houston (Trinity College Dublin)

In the second instalment of Deborah Levy's 'living autobiography' *The Cost of Living* (2018), the various spaces in which Levy lives, works, and leaves behind are central to this narrative of contemporary womanhood and creativity. From the 'fairy tale of The Family Home' to decrepit Art Deco apartment blocks and garden sheds, the idea of home is made and unmade in various ways. This paper will analyse the distinct domestic spaces Levy inhabits and the discourses of femininity, (re)production, and artistic creation inherent to such spaces. The home as a patriarchal concept and ideal—one which Levy challenges and disrupts in her life writing—will be considered with particular reference to the contemporary moment and how the patriarchal ideal of home as woman's responsibility and man's refuge has mutated, yet ultimately remains unchanged in the early twenty-first century. This paper will argue that throughout *The Cost of Living*, Levy offers a way of navigating the patriarchal home and explores homemaking outside of patriarchal ideals and the matrix of the nuclear, heteronormative family. While Levy does not reproduce an idealised or utopian domesticity to match that of the patriarchal model, other modes of homemaking (and unmaking) are attempted and ambivalently lived. By invoking a feminist, literary intertext on the home, domesticity, and creativity through allusions to Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, Louise Bourgeois and others, Levy explores alternative avenues of homemaking as a woman-creator through the continuum of women's artistic expression regarding the home.

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**Dearbhaile Houston** is a PhD candidate at the School of English, Trinity College Dublin and is supported by a TCD Postgraduate Research Studentship (2017-2020). She received her MPhil in Gender and Women's Studies from TCD in 2017. Her current research focuses on hauntologies of domestic space in contemporary women's fiction since 1980, including the work of Lorrie Moore, Alice Munro, and Anne Enright.

## Not Me, But You? Telling Another's Trauma in Contemporary French Women's Life-Writing

Hannie Lawlor (Wolfson College, Oxford)

At the centre of the contemporary drive for women to speak out is the platform of shared experience: #metoo has established a powerful site of intersection between one's own experience and that of others from which emerges a collective testimony that demands to be heard. What happens, then, in the case of experiences that authors have *not* shared, but to which they nonetheless feel compelled to testify? In the midst of 'me too', is there also room for 'not me, but you'? This paper explores how contemporary French women writers are navigating this dynamic, using their life-writing practice to give voice to the traumatic experiences endured by previous generations of women who were denied the platform for testimony to which these authors now have access. More specifically, I investigate the challenges that they face in writing these intergenerational stories. Can their belated 'testimonies' resist filling in the painful silences, filling up the empty spaces left by the victims themselves? In her 2012 publication *La Réparation* [Reparations], Colombe Schneck wrestles with these very questions as she gives an account of her family's long-suppressed ordeal during the Holocaust alongside her own present-day experiences, worlds apart from the legacy of suffering that she inherits. In view of the strategies that Schneck uses to transport her narrative beyond the dichotomies of 'mine' *or* 'yours', 'speech' *or* 'silence', I explore how contemporary women life-writers might move towards a kind of narrative balance between 'me' and 'you', mobilising their own power of voice to make the silence imposed on previous generations heard.

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**Hannie Lawlor** is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of her AHRC-funded PhD at Wolfson College, Oxford, and completed her BA and M.St. at Lady Margaret Hall. She works on contemporary French and Spanish life-writing by women authors, focusing on works published since the turn of the millennium. Her thesis explores intergenerational relationships in life-writing, specifically in responses to trauma, and the narrative and ethical challenges that are faced when recounting multiple life-stories in the same textual space. By exposing and exploring these relational challenges, as well as the strategies that contemporary authors put in place to navigate them, she investigates the extent to which a balance might be reached between the competing, and at times conflicting, perspectives and voices in these interlocking lives.

## From Insta-Poetry to Auto-Fictional Memoir: Intermedial Self-Writings in Yrsa Daley-Ward's Works

Jennifer Leetsch (Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg)

This paper will examine the artistic work of the Black British writer Yrsa Daley-Ward. Daley-Ward, who is of West-African and Caribbean descent, grew up in North England and became internationally recognised as a member of the so-called “Insta-Poets” brigade: a group of predominantly young women of colour who publish their poetry online – on Instagram, Tumblr, or Twitter (cf. Rupi Kaur, Warsan Shire, or Nayyirah Waheed) – and who have revolutionised the traditional poetry publishing landscape with their simultaneously visceral and vulnerable wor(l)ds. Daley-Ward published her first poetry collection, titled *bone*, in 2014, and last year saw the publication of her auto-fictional memoir, *The Terrible* (2018). By aligning the printed text with new media forms used in Daley-Ward's work, my paper traces new and experimental forms of black female life writing.

On the one hand, I will look at the way Daley-Ward's debut poetry collection *bone* and her auto-fictional memoir *The Terrible*, a verse-novel which interlinks prose and poetry in complex ways, give voice to a specifically Black British coming-of-age narrative – connecting stories of black girlhood in North England with nuanced notions of mental health, queer desire, and self-empowerment. Secondly, I want to illuminate the intermedial impulses present in the rise of social media as a platform through which many young black women publicly curate their autobiographical presences. As Tracy Curtis has argued in *New Media in Black Women's Autobiography: Intrepid Embodiment and Narrative Innovation*, “black women create counter narratives to mainstream discourse in a shifting technological landscape [...] paying sustained attention to black women's insistence on embodiment within autobiographical narratives in the era of new media” (Curtis 2015).

Through conjoining different media and different textualities as well as through extending her works beyond their genre conventions, Daley-Ward articulates the fraught intimacies between Africa and Europe in a space decidedly marked by notions of communality and conviviality. Stemming from multiple points of geographical, historical and cultural origin and speaking to multiple audiences, her intermedial self-writings create concrete and imaginary worldly entanglements. I posit that her multi-faceted self-writings in different media excavate not only Daley-Ward's individual experiences but can also be read as a communally-oriented, politically activist form of expression.

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**Jennifer Leetsch**, after studying English, American and Comparative Literature at LMU Munich and King's College London, joined the department of English Literature and British Cultural Studies at Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg, where she works on the intersections of affect and space in contemporary diasporic women's writing and where she teaches seminars on migration, literary geography, and Black British prose and poetry. Her research interests include, amongst others: the interrelation of gender and disability, black autobiography, and feminist ecocriticism.

***For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt: Poetry and Protest in the Digital Age***

**Maria Manning (University College, Cork)**

This paper seeks to trace a continuing line which exemplifies modern women's poetry's ability to testify to women's experience, looking to poets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century advancing this tradition. Taking inspiration from Audre Lorde's essay "Poetry Is Not a Luxury", in which she establishes the connection between poetry and politics, I will examine the idea that "[p]oetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought". Feminist protest poetry has long been a staple of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with poets such as Lorde using the genre to depict their experiences and inspire and reflect social changes. In this paper, I will aim to trace a tradition of poetry of resistance, exploring the new ways of writing in this vein in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In light of the shift towards digital literature and the prevalence of poetry on social media, this paper will examine how poets today reconfigure poetic form and investigate the continued interplay between spoken word poetry and protest, in the work of poets Warsan Shire and Jamila Woods, as well as the new cohort of "Instapoets", Yrsa Daley-Ward and Rupi Kaur. I will explore how each poet crafts their work, examining how these mediums of performance nuance poetic expression. Similarly, through the work of each poet, I will examine the ways in which these new forums for poetic expression further the protest and resistance that is central to women's poetry, and the ways this digital publishing impacts the poetic form.

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**Maria Manning** is a First Year PhD candidate in University College Cork's School of English, supervised by Professor Lee Jenkins. Her current research focuses on the aesthetics of women performance poets working in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Her thesis is currently titled "The Evolving Art of Female Performance Poetry" and examines the expanding poetic canon and the place of poetry in performance within it. She completed both her BA and her MA in UCC, graduating from the latter in 2016. Her research interests include Contemporary Poetry, Gender Theories, African American Literature, Postcolonial Theories and Performance.

## **Women Watching Men Taming Birds: Animality and Subversion in the Short Stories of Anaïs Nin and Angela Carter**

**Hayley McNally (Teesside University)**

In this paper I shall be examining the literal and metaphorical presence of animals in Anaïs Nin's *Delta of Venus* (1977) and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). I shall explore the ways in which their short fiction presents female sexuality and, by subverting the male gaze, reimagines the longstanding alignment of birds, snakes and women. By considering the negative implications of avian and feminine alignment with 'natural' beauty in the past, I will argue that contemporary uses have been considerably more potent as tools for advocating and representing female and animal emancipation.

I will consider the symbolism of the Medusa myth within the texts as demonstrations of both female power and oppression. I will unite the work of contemporary critics such as Carol J. Adams, Helene Cixous and Michael Lundblad to create an original perspective on the topics of female animality and sexuality. I will also draw upon non-canonical Victorian New Woman writers such as Mona Caird, Olive Schreiner and Charlotte Perkins-Gilman to add historical support and a Darwinian feminist lens as well as to demonstrate the evolution of human and non-human parallels; indicating a shift from subjugation to empowerment.

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**Hayley McNally** is an MA English student currently studying at Teesside University. Her work focuses on the representation of human and non-human animals in tv, film and literature. Her aim is to highlight the link between racism, sexism, ableism and speciesism in order to expose and dismantle institutionalised prejudices. Her current dissertation research examines the representation of animals, disability and pacifism in World War One literature. She has given several public talks over the last year on intersectional veganism and Victorian vegetarian/New Woman writers.

## Revolting Women: Reconfiguring Abjection in Dodie Bellamy's *Cunt-Ups* Aimee Merrydew (Keele University, UK)

The “abject female body” is a recurring trope in the Western imaginary, from Freud’s theory of castration anxiety to contemporary horror films and the marketing of menstruation products (“sanitary towels”). What these representations have in common is the view that women’s bodies are disgusting, threatening, and require sanitising, regulating, and/or eradicating. The abject has been examined in feminist theory, most notably in the work of Julia Kristeva (1982), Barbara Creed (1986), Judith Butler (1993), Sara Ahmed (2004), and Imogen Tyler (2013). This paper will engage with feminist scholarship on abjection in order to challenge the ways in which disgust is weaponised in patriarchal culture to maintain oppressive male-female relations. To achieve this, I will focus on Dodie Bellamy’s pornographic prose poetry collection *Cunt-Ups*. *Cunt-Ups* abounds in images of abjection, namely the speakers’ dismembered bodies and an array of bodily wastes, such as vaginal lubrication (“cunt juice”) and blood (“drops of blood oozing from my backend”). I will argue that these images of abjection aid Bellamy in resisting and recuperating women’s abject subjectification by playing on ideas of bodily excess and uncontrollability, both of which are hallmarks of the abject body. I will also explore how repetition and fragmentation function as textual strategies enabling Bellamy to intervene in the abjectification of women’s bodies and simultaneously trouble “woman” as a socio-political label used to maintain patriarchal order. The paper’s central motivation is to introduce *Cunt-Ups* as a text which centres critiques of cis-heteronormativity, the stigmatising discourses concerning women’s bodies, and the subjugated knowledge of women-identified subjects.

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**Aimee Merrydew** is a second-year PhD Candidate and Graduate Teaching Assistant in English Literature at Keele University, UK. Aimee’s research is primarily concerned with gender and sexualities in women’s experimental poetry and the contemporary United States more broadly. More specifically, Aimee’s thesis argues that experimental poetry provides methods through which to reconfigure language, bodies, and knowledge in order to “talk back” to heteropatriarchal narratives that “represent” women.

## Using A Gentle Approach to Deliver Punches: How Feminist Chinese Science Fiction Creates Critical Socio-political Commentary in *An Excess Male* Yen Ooi (Royal Holloway, University of London)

‘Science fiction, traditionally a form of writing dominated by men, is especially vulnerable to feminist infiltration and expropriation, for reasons inherent in the form.’

Patricia Duncker\*

In the above quote, Patricia Duncker elaborates on Sarah Lefanu’s idea that ‘Feminism questions a given order in political terms, while science fiction questions its imaginative terms.’\* In *An Excess Male*, the marrying of both the political and the imaginative comes together through a skilful and yet natural manipulation of the genre of Chinese science fiction.

In her debut novel, Maggie Shen King introduces her readers to a near-future Beijing where there are too many men in the society. Aiming for reasonable cultural and personal fulfilment, the government has introduced the notion of Advanced families – where women are able to take on a maximum of three husbands. The matchmaking process and arrangements are anything but simple, yet this seemingly inevitable yet fantastical notion is not the core of this book, but rather it is in the day-to-day issues of China (today), a China that is recognisable despite the futuristic setting in its treatment of the LGBT and special needs communities, the never-ending persistence of corruption and exploitation, the cultural expectations of older generations, and more.

This paper seeks to show how Maggie Shen King manages to interlace such critical observations with captivating storytelling. Her choice of main story arc is one of love – a man trying to find the perfect wife – yet, his journey to fulfilment is a treacherous one, not only for himself, but also for his fiancés – his future family. Within the genre of Chinese science fiction, the cultural aspect of the story can be told in an unassuming and gentle manner, while the use of science fiction creates the turmoil by setting it in a Beijing of the future.

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**Yen Ooi** is the author of *Sun: Queens of Earth* (novel), *A Suspicious Collection of Short Stories and Poetry* (collection), and *Road to Guangdong* (computer game). Her short stories and poetry have been featured in various publications; most recently, her short story 'The Butterfly Lovers' was published in *The Good Journal 3*. She is a PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London, focusing on Chinese science fiction, where she is interested in the evolution of the genre and the discourses between native and diasporic voices. As a writer and editor, Yen hopes to develop writing that is rich in culture that will add further value to the development of genre fiction. Yen is a lecturer at Westminster University's MA Creative Writing course, a mentor in marketing and publishing, and co-founder of CreateThinkDo. She is a member of BACLS, BSFA, LSFRC, and Worldcon.

**Toward Asian Victim-Survivor Narrative: Rape and Form in Yihan Lin's *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise* and Shiori Ito's *Black Box***  
**Jun Qiang (University of York)**

In February 2017, Yihan Lin, a female Taiwanese published her first and last work, *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise*. This autobiographical fiction, based on Yihan Lin's adolescent experiences of being raped, aroused turmoil and caused a series of # MeToo posts and responses in the social media of Taiwan and Mainland China. In October 2017, Japanese journalist Shiori Ito published *Black Box*, a memoir recording her alleged rape case and experience of being intoxicated and raped by Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a well-known journalist and acquaintance of Japanese Prime Minister. Shiori's experience of going public made her the representative and leader of the # MeToo Movement in Japan.

This paper aims to raise questions surrounding representations of female victim-survivors and male sex offenders in contemporary Asia; about female subjectivity as controlled in a hierarchic society characteristic with group silence and seen under male gaze; and ultimately, the ways that victim-survivor narratives might subvert this. By examining the representation of rape and trauma in Yihan Lin's *Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise* and Shiori Ito's *Black Box*, I challenge the dominated "victim-survivor" narrative models which fail to account for the complexity of Asian experiences with sexual violence. My discussion posits the "victim-survivor narrative" as a form that engages with multiple experiences of rape and pliant responses to sexual violence. I will also demonstrate that the "victim-survivor narrative" serves multiple purposes, which include but are not limited to expression and crying. To do so, this paper will change the widely recognized rape survivor model and demonstrate the female protagonists' complex imperatives and consciousnesses in Asian narrative.

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**Jun Qiang** is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of York where she is working on spatial research. Her current research is concerned with spatial issues in texts, with special focus on place and space in Edith Wharton's transatlantic fiction and historical materials of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Jun finished her master programme of U.S. Literature in the University of Edinburgh. Her current interests include Edith Wharton, Place and Space, American and Asian Literature, Feminine and Queer Narrative, and Art and Literature. She previously wrote on southern American literature; American writers in Paris; genre and gender in global modern fiction; space and power relations; and narrative strategies in women's writing. Jun is also a creative writer, calligrapher and painter. She works as a college tutor in Wentworth College where she conducts weekly Chinese Calligraphy and Painting events and digital creative workshops. Twitter: @JunQiang15

## Becoming-transient – Hybridity in Women's Experimental Writing Carly Robinson (Birkbeck, University of London)

In this paper I will be discussing how experimental techniques of writing the contemporary moment, pave the way for a genre defying hybridity of form, incorporating highly politicised literature and highlighting the need for alternative ways to reflect our current mode of being in the world. Looking specifically at Olivia Laing's *Crudo*, Ali Smith's seasonal quartet and Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, I argue that these narratives, written as real time reflections of the unfolding contemporary, offer up a new way of thinking about what experimental literature can do and how it holds affective power to engage readers in a call to action. Using the work of Sara Ahmed as a model for generating new ideas of feminist theory and practice based on our lived experience, I argue that these texts bring to the fore a political feminist agenda as they navigate through the troubling social and political tumult of Brexit, the Trump administration and the resulting rise of the far right.

Nelson, Smith and Laing offer up fractured and interspersed narratives, full of disruption and interjections to reflect the experience of the digitally entrenched subject within contemporary society. I argue that these multi-faceted texts utilise this experimentation with form to expose the postmodern disjunctive self as the resultant figure of contemporary transient subjectivity, ever changing and absorbing the influence of the relentless cultural landscape. I argue that these texts expose this predicament and pose suggestions for how we can slip outside of these all-consuming cultural paradigms.

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**Carly Robinson** completed her BA in European Philosophy and Literature with Women's Studies and her MA in Women's Studies at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. She is in the third year of her part time PhD in the department of Arts & Humanities at Birkbeck, University of London, supervised jointly by Dr Caroline Edwards and Dr Nathalie Wourm. Her thesis is an interdisciplinary exploration of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of becoming with a view to deploying it as a model in the service of a progressive feminist politics within contemporary women's experimental fiction.

## The Popular Femifesto: 'Rape Culture', Social Media and the Methods of the Fourth Wave

Bethan Roper (University of Hull)

As Jackson writes, feminism is now “staged as ‘cool in mainstream media’” (Jackson, 2018, 33). Thus, ‘popular’ feminism, which intersects with celebrity culture, social media and popular culture, is a growing influence on our society. Simultaneously, the last five years have seen an influx of non-fiction feminist manifestos, aimed at a popular audience, which have dominated non-fiction shelves. These ‘femifestos’, written by women in the public eye and aimed at ‘everyday’ feminists, have so-far been neglected by academic feminism. However, these texts provide insight into the shape of the fourth wave and illuminate the issues, platforms and methods of ‘popular’ feminism. This paper examines how three diverse ‘femifestos’ approach themes central to fourth wave feminism; rape culture, social media as a mode of activism, and inclusivity. It examines Roxane Gay’s *Bad Feminist*, Laura Bates’ *Everyday Sexism* and Deborah Frances-White’s *The Guilty Feminist* to demonstrate that authors are crossing boundaries between specialisms to produce texts which appeal to a popular audience. These ‘celebrity’ authors who are prominent on social media exemplify a trend in contemporary feminism of merging feminist ideology with popular culture. This paper examines Gay’s vindication of rape culture in *Bad Feminist*, social media and hashtag activism in *Everyday Sexism*, and inclusivity, feminist community and humour in Frances-White’s *The Guilty Feminist*. In doing so, this paper aims to demonstrate that popular ‘femifestos’ give insight into the issues, platforms and methods of ‘popular’ feminism and the genre should be recognised for its contribution to academic feminism.

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**Bethan Roper** is an MA student at the University of Hull. She has a first-class BA (Hons) in English Literature from the same institution and intends to pursue a PhD in women’s studies. Her research interests are gender inequality and the progressive waves of feminism. She is currently researching the disputed status of the fourth wave, its relationship with social media and manifestations of ‘rape culture’ in contemporary society.

## Myriam Gurba's Feminist Revisioning of True Crime Hannah Spruce (University of Leicester)

On the back cover of Myriam Gurba's literary survivor memoir *MEAN* (2017), Coffee House Press brand the book a work of 'true crime', a genre known for conservative politics, voyeuristic portrayals of violent crime, monstrous criminals, and blameworthy victims. Given the nature of Gurba's text as a provocative, feminist, and darkly witty memoir about sexual violence and murder, at first, the branding seems like an eye-brow-raising interpellation.

The paper discusses how the appellation poses a challenge to a problematic genre that is complicit with the cultural and legal revictimization of women who are raped. The paper argues that Gurba's autofiction uses a grotesque, provocative humour to rewrite the true crime genre and repurpose it for progressive political ends. Gurba's feminist true crime exposes and challenges the ways that true crime engages in victim blaming and violent crime voyeurism. By adopting the persona of the 'final girl' (the woman in film theory who 'gets to live' because she 'knows just how evil the ordinary guy is'), Gurba speaks back to a genre complicit with the re-victimising of women who have survived sexual violence.

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**Hannah Spruce** is a PhD student in English at the University of Leicester. Her research is funded by Midlands3Cities, an AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership. She is published in the peer-reviewed journal *Estudios Irlandeses* and is Managing Editor of the *Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society*.

Her PhD project is a critique of the ableism, classism, racism, and sexism inherent in cultural narratives of psychopathy. Through a focus on 21<sup>st</sup>-century genre fiction, she explores how US and Canadian women writers use psychopathic characters or psychopathy as a broad theme. She examines work that is complicit with the ways that psychopathy dehumanises and pathologises women, people of colour, the working classes, and people diagnosed as autistic, and balances these with texts that offer nuanced ways of understanding human cruelty or that offer a corrective to the aforementioned harms of psychopathy discourses.

## Writing (From) the Fragments – Affective Modes of Women's Writing Wiktoría Tunška (Cardiff University)

This paper investigates writing (from the) fragments as a contemporary women's writing mode. My analysis focuses on Kate Zambreno's *Heroines*, as an example of writing fragments. Kate Zambreno tells the story of 'the mad wives of modernism' – the women whose life stories are full of trauma and shame, and whose biographies are written from remnants. The book, being partially a postmodern essay, and partially an (auto)biography, is created from fragments. In my paper, I argue that for women writers, immersed in an oppressive patriarchal world, accepting fragmentation as one's writing strategy is a liberating gesture. This paper also discusses whether the longing for absent complete art works may be replaced by the acceptance of the fragmentary presence. By a close reading of *Heroines*, I explore representations of affect in women's writing (focusing particularly on shame and trauma), as well as a connection between affect and the fragmentary form. I also investigate whether emotions (in their nature subjective and dynamic) are related to the problem of fragmentation. Shame and trauma are my main points of interest as they seem to be emotions connecting the mad wives in Zambreno's biographies. Moreover, they are experiences that strike one's sense of ego. Additionally, both emotions significantly shape the formal construction of Kate Zambreno's *Heroines*. I also argue that accepting an inevitable fragmentariness may help in overcoming shame as well as trauma.

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**Wiktoría Tunška** completed her undergraduate studies in Polish Philology (Literature and Language) at Adam Mickiewicz University, and continues her education at Cardiff University (MA in English Literature). Her articles were published in *Forum of Poetics* and *Dyskursy Widzialności. Słowa a Obrazy*. She wrote literary reviews for 'eCzas Kultury', 'popmoderna.pl' and 'Pro Arte'. She is interested in literary theory, affective studies and contemporary European literature. In her work she traces the relation between modern and contemporary literature and emotions, focusing on shame and trauma studies. As Wiktoría specialises in Polish literature, she plans to complete her PhD thesis in the area of Slavonic Studies.

## Is Literature a Plausible Lie? Writing, Rape and Trauma in *Fang Si-Qi's First Love Paradise*

Feifei Zhan (SOAS University of London)

Shortly after the publication of her debut novel, *Fang Si-Qi's First Love Paradise* (2017), Lin Yi-Han committed suicide. In this novel, Li Guo-Hua, a teacher of Chinese literature, had raped the beautiful prodigy student Fang Si-Qi since she was 13. He cloaked his brutality under the literary romantic confessions to Si-Qi, whose love for literature and life was destructed by the sexual abuse and Li Guo-Hua's plausible lies. Lin Yi-Han's parents later alleged that the haunting memory of Si-Qi was based on the author's own traumatic experience, which led to her mental illness and suicide.

The novel is haunted by the struggling belief to see beauty and truth in literature, and this belief betrayed by seeing literature used as a manipulative weapon of sex crimes. Piling literary quotes, sophisticated metaphors and twisted use of idioms, both Si-Qi and Lin Yi-Han repetitively questioned the effectiveness of literature in presenting and expressing women's trauma in a language system dominated by patriarchal discourse. Despite recognising the unreliability of literature, this novel, as a literary production per se and opening with a statement "based on true story", shows an attempt to reconstruct a trauma narrative and reality that are otherwise denied in rape culture.

Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of novel, this paper will look at how doubts in literature as presented in the novel turn out to be interrogations of the normalized patriarchal narrative, and how Lin's writing creates possibilities for rewriting history of female individuals and recognising the silenced gendered trauma.

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**Feifei Zhan** is a second-year PhD student at the Centre of Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS University of London. Her PhD thesis is about women's biological pain and mother-daughter relationships in post-1990 Chinese literature. Before she started her PhD, Zhan completed her master's degrees in comparative literature at Kings College London with distinction, and in translation and interpreting at Newcastle University.

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<https://www.nopanic.org.uk/>

**Helps people who suffer from Panic Attacks, Phobias, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders and other related anxiety disorders including those people who are trying to give up Tranquillizers.**

### **Phone numbers**

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**0330 606 1174**

Helpline

**0844 967 4848**

**\*Everyday 10am-10pm. Calls Charged at 5ppm + access charge**

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**0808 802 9999**

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